

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A programmable oscillator comprising a capacitor; a current generator couplable to said capacitor that generates a charging current of said capacitor; further comprising at least one resistance coupled to said capacitor; a comparator coupled to said capacitor for comparing a voltage at the terminals of said capacitor with a prefixed reference voltage and for generating an output signal; a first switch, controlled by said output signal, coupled to said capacitor, that creates a current path able to facilitate the discharging of said capacitor.

2. The oscillator according to claim 1 wherein said oscillator generates an output voltage comprised between a first voltage value and a second voltage value and said prefixed reference voltage is comprised between said first voltage value and said second voltage value.

3. The oscillator according to claim 1 wherein said first switch is placed in parallel with said capacitor and short-circuits said capacitor.

4. The oscillator according to claim 1 wherein said at least one resistance is connected in parallel with said capacitor.

5. The oscillator according to claim 1, further comprising a second switch that selectively couples said current generator to said capacitor.

6. The oscillator according to claim 5 wherein said second switch switches from a first state to a second state in response to the voltage at the terminals of said capacitor.

7. A controller circuit for lamps of the ballast type comprising a half bridge that drives a lamp, said half bridge being controlled by an oscillator that comprises a capacitor; a current generator couplable to said capacitor that generates a charging current of said capacitor; further comprising at least one resistance coupled to said capacitor; a comparator coupled to said capacitor for comparing a voltage at the terminals of said capacitor with a prefixed reference voltage and for generating an output signal; a first switch, controlled by said output signal, coupled to said capacitor, that creates a current path able to facilitate the discharging of said capacitor.

8. A integrated circuit comprising a programmable oscillator according to claim 1 that comprises only a first and a second control pin external to said integrated circuit; said current generator is coupled to said first pin; said capacitor is coupled to said second pin.